

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/bs-ho-csx-elkridge-20110324,0,4364550.story>

# Baltimore Sun

## Rail transfer facility site list shortens

### Elkridge one of four finalists

By Larry Carson and Joe Burris, The Baltimore Sun  
*10:25 p.m. EDT, March 24, 2011*

State transportation officials have narrowed their list of potential sites for a \$150 million truck-to-rail CSX container transfer facility along the main Camden rail line from 12 to four finalists, including two in Howard, one in Anne Arundel and one in Prince George's counties.

One of the four sites is stirring controversy because its location — at Hanover and Race roads in Elkridge — is near a potential site for a much-needed new elementary school. The school, if built, would sit next to **Coca Cola** Drive in a planned 1,000-apartment, mixed-use development called Oxford Square, on the north side of Route 100 near the Dorsey commuter train station. The developer offered to donate 20 acres and \$4 million to build the school at the site.

The proposal has complicated the school site decision and upset residents who want a school but worry about truck traffic, congestion and possible accidents. The trucks would haul containers from the port of Baltimore nearby all day and night.

More than 100 members of the Greater Elkridge Community Association met Thursday night to begin deciding how to respond. The school board has delayed a decision on the school site until June. However, it authorized staff to begin planning for a 600-student school without specifying a site, enabling plans for the school to get under way while the CSX issue is decided.

The new rail facility would allow cargo containers filled with consumer goods removed from ships in Baltimore's harbor to be trucked south past the confining, century-old Howard Street railroad tunnel and stacked two high on rail cars headed west. It would free needed space at the port and aid the railroad's operations.

"The low clearance of the Howard Street tunnel in Baltimore City does not provide freight railroads with the double-stack capability that is so critical to compete in today's business environment," **Maryland** Transportation Secretary Beverley K. Swaim-Staley said in a news release Thursday. The new facility will open "new doors of commerce" to benefit the entire state, she said.

The Anne Arundel site is on state-owned land next to the Jessup Correctional Institution east of the tracks between Brock Bridge Road and Route 175. Another Howard site is nearby, just west of the tracks on the north side of Montevideo Road, which is also in Jessup. The fourth option is east of the line between Sunnyside Avenue and Powder Mill Road, west of Route 201 in **Prince George's County**.

The state has planned three public workshops late next month to explain the sites, but the final selection won't be made for up to another year, according to Leif Dormsjo, chief of staff to Swaim-Staley.

Dormsjo said the sites have the five attributes the facility would need. All can accommodate at least 70 acres of rectangular-shaped work space, are next to the main rail line and are near major, controlled access highways. The longer National Environmental Policy Act evaluation of the sites will take nine months to 12 months and will include more detailed studies and comparison of traffic, environmental and cost estimates for the project.

Although the Elkridge site might be the most complex, with at least a dozen separate property owners, Dormsjo said a planned interchange at Hanover Road and Baltimore-Washington Parkway could provide other advantages when it is built. There is no funding for that yet, however. He said all four sites would be fully evaluated and there is no favorite, though he acknowledged that CSX officials have begun talking to property owners in Elkridge to smooth purchases if that site is chosen.

"Every site has its strengths and weaknesses," he said, noting that the prison site, while already state-owned, could require expensive grading and reshaping.

He added that state transportation officials are helping Howard County look for alternative school sites. But he said, "We can co-exist. From an operational standpoint, it will work" with new traffic signals and changes to roads.

Chris Patusksy of MDOT's department of real estate said, "If we don't put an intermodal facility south of the Howard Street tunnel [the rail traffic] would pass right through the state, and we would not be able to access double stack. We would only have single stack in the state. It would be like if you put

an interstate highway in the state and you had no interchange where your cars were allowed to get on and off."

During the presentation, MDOT showed images of all four sites, and audience members interrupted when the Hanover site was shown.

"That's a residential neighborhood."

"That's a lot of residential neighborhoods."

"My house is right across the street."

"I can see that from my bedroom window."

After the presentation, residents conveyed their anger and frustration about the process, questioning why they were not involved and informed before the 12 sites were narrowed to four, why the site wouldn't work better in **Baltimore County** and why the Howard Street tunnel could not be widened and elevated. Some expressed concerns over traffic by the facility and how close it would come to the proposed school.

One woman stood up during the questions and said, "I'm feeling very railroaded right now."

"From the community what I'm hearing is that we should have been in the process sooner, we should have known other sites were involved and we should have had input in selecting those sites before now," association president **Howard Johnson**, said. "From MDOT, I'm hearing is that they've been approached by CSX to provide land and backup with a grant with a site that suits CSX's needs."

The public workshops on the sites will be held April 20 at Beltsville Academy, 4300 Wicomico Ave., Beltsville; April 21 at Hebron Harmon Elementary School, 7660 Ridge Chapel Road, Hanover; and April 27 at Elkridge Landing Middle School, 7985 Montgomery Road, Elkridge. The sessions are all scheduled from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The state also has a website with the details and maps of the locations at [intermodal.maryland.gov](http://intermodal.maryland.gov).

***[larry.carson@baltsun.com](mailto:larry.carson@baltsun.com)***

***[joseph.burris@baltsun.com](mailto:joseph.burris@baltsun.com)***